

Janitorial Safety Tip Sheet

A series of health and safety tips to prevent work-related injuries in the janitorial industry



August 2020

Issue 2, Volume 7



Protect Yourself at Work: How to Clean and Disinfect for COVID-19 (Coronavirus)

Janitorial/custodial workers are on the front lines to help contain the spread of COVID-19 and other harmful viruses. Know how to clean and disinfect areas, to reduce the risk of infection. Below are some tips to keep in mind.

Depending on the type of facility:

- Close off areas used by sick people, and
- Wait as long as possible (up to 24 hours) before beginning to clean and disinfect areas used by sick people.
- Open outside doors and windows to increase air circulation in the area.
- Make sure you have and use all necessary personal protective equipment (PPE) – such as masks, gloves, & eye protection.
- Clean and disinfect all areas (e.g., offices, bathrooms, and common areas) used by sick people.
- Focus especially on frequently touched surfaces.
- If surfaces are dirty, **clean first** using a detergent or soap and water, **then disinfect**.



Clean: means **removing dirt** and other substances from surfaces.

Differences:



Disinfect: means using chemicals to **kill germs** on surfaces.

How to disinfect:

- Use diluted household bleach solutions, or
- Alcohol solutions with at least 70% alcohol, or
- Most common EPA-registered household disinfectants should be effective.
- Find and use [safer chemicals and practices when cleaning and disinfecting](#).
- **Diluted bleach solutions** can be used if appropriate for the surface.
 - Ask your supervisor or manager to decide which chemicals to use where.
 - Follow manufacturer's instructions for use and make sure you have proper ventilation.
 - Check to make sure the product is not past its expiration date.

Prepare a diluted bleach solution by mixing:

- 5 tablespoons (1/3rd cup) bleach per gallon of water or
- 4 teaspoons bleach per quart of water

- **Never mix household bleach with ammonia or any other cleanser.**
- **Alcohol solutions** (at least 70% alcohol) can be used if appropriate for the surface
- Products with [EPA-approved emerging viral pathogens claims](#) are expected to be effective against COVID-19 based on data for harder-to-kill viruses. Follow the manufacturer's instructions for all cleaning and disinfection products (e.g., concentration, how to apply, and contact time, etc.).
- For **soft (porous) surfaces** such as carpeted floor, rugs, and drapes, remove visible contamination if present and clean with appropriate cleaners designed for use on these surfaces. After cleaning:
 - If the items can be laundered, wash items according to the manufacturer's instructions, using the warmest appropriate water setting for the items and then dry items completely.
 - If items cannot be laundered, use products with the EPA-approved emerging viral pathogens claims that are suitable for porous surfaces.

For Linens, Clothing, and Other Items That Go in the Laundry:

- Wash items in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. If possible, launder items using the warmest appropriate water setting for the items and dry items completely. Dirty laundry that has been in contact with a sick person can be washed with other people's items.
- **Do not shake dirty laundry;** this reduces the possibility of scattering virus through the air.
- **Clean and disinfect hampers or other carts for transporting laundry** according to directions above for hard or soft surfaces.



Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and Hand Hygiene:

- If you are cleaning infected areas, wear **masks, disposable gloves, and gowns** for all tasks in the cleaning process, including handling trash.
 - Gloves and gowns should be compatible with the disinfectant products being used.
- Additional PPE (such as eye protection) **might be required** based on the cleaning/disinfectant products being used and whether there is a risk of splash.
- **Gloves and gowns used should be removed carefully** to avoid contamination of the wearer and the surrounding area. **Wash** hands thoroughly after removing PPE.
- **Immediately report breaks in PPE** (e.g., tear in gloves) or any potential exposures to the virus, to your supervisor.
- **Clean hands often, including immediately after removing gloves and after contact with a sick person,** by washing hands with soap and water for 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available and hands are not visibly dirty, an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains **60%-95% alcohol** may be used.
 - **However, if hands are visibly dirty, always wash hands with soap and water.**
- **Follow normal preventive actions,** including cleaning hands often and avoiding touching eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands.
- Additional **key times to clean hands** include:
 - After blowing one's nose, coughing, or sneezing
 - After using the restroom
 - Before eating or preparing food
 - After contact with animals or pets
 - Before and after providing routine care for another person who needs assistance (e.g., a child)

Please refer to the [complete CDC guidelines \(interim recommendations\)](#), and the [list of EPA-approved Disinfectants](#) for more information.